

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:41 p.m. at the Westwood Marquis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen S. Brixey III, husband of Representative Sanchez; State Senator Diane Watson; and State Controller Kathleen Connell.

**Remarks at a Democratic
Congressional Campaign Committee
Dinner in Beverly Hills, California
May 3, 1998**

The President. Thank you very much. There may be one person in America, Dick Gephardt's 90-year-old mother, who wants to call him "Mr. Speaker" worse than I do—but no more than one. *[Laughter]*

Thank you for your leadership. Thank you for hanging in there these last couple of years. You have no idea, those of you who may not follow this on a daily basis, how many good things happened since the 1994 elections when we lost the majority, because we had a large, strong, united minority that on many occasions made common cause with a brave band of Republicans who would stand with us to continue to move this country forward. In some ways, that's a harder thing to do. And Dick Gephardt also led in that effort, and I'm very grateful to him for that.

Thank you, Martin Frost. I thank all the members of the California delegation who were introduced. I thank Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis and our State Democratic chair, Art Torres, for being here as well. And ladies and gentlemen, I thank all of you, especially Eli and Edye, thanks for having me back at your house.

You know, Martin Frost got up here and sort of made that offhand remark about how this was the largest amount of money that we had ever raised at a private home. And I thought if you got here in time to take a tour, you know it hasn't been a fair fight. *[Laughter]*

I think I should repeat something I said. I once went to Marvin and Barbara Davis's home and I walked down that beautiful spiral staircase, and I said, "You know, this place makes the White House look like public housing." *[Laughter]* That's sort of how I feel tonight. And of course, the White House is public housing. *[Laughter]* And I thank you

for letting me and my family be tenants for a little while. It has effective rent control as well. *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, I've had a wonderful time tonight. It's been great to see so many of my old friends and meet some people I haven't met before. I want to thank you for many things. I want to thank you for being so good to me and to Hillary and to Al Gore and to our administration. California has had a very special role in our public life, as all of you know.

I want to thank you for being here for these folks tonight. And I want to ask you to try to in the next few months find every opportunity to put your voice where you've put your investment tonight, because we have a case to make to the American people. When I took office, I believed that the most important thing I could do is to throw off sort of the dead hand of history that I thought had paralyzed Washington, to try to move our country forward and galvanize our party's energies to think about what we wanted America to look like in the 21st century.

Many of you have heard me say this before, but I'm going to say it again; I believe at every age and time, America has to reaffirm three great missions. We have always to deepen the meaning of liberty, to widen the circle of opportunity, and to strengthen the bonds of our National Union. That's an interesting thing to do in this day and age, when there are still vestiges of fairly profound discrimination against some Americans; when, in spite of all of our economic opportunity, there are still places in inner cities and isolated rural areas, Native American settlements on reservations around the country, where the spark of enterprise is still not reached, and where we now are becoming more and more diverse than we ever have been before in every conceivable way. And we are clearly the most diverse democracy in the world in terms of people that actually live in elbow range of one another. In addition, for more than 50 years now, we have had both the responsibility and the opportunity to try to lead the world toward greater peace and freedom and prosperity.

So that's what we set about doing in 1993, and with only Democrats voting for us, we

passed an economic program which had reduced the deficit by 92 percent before the first red cent was saved by the balanced budget amendment that was adopted in the Congress—the balanced budget plan.

Now, we have today the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest consumer confidence in 30 years, the highest homeownership in history, the lowest welfare rolls in 27 years, the lowest crime rolls in 24 years—lowest crime rates. And I'm very grateful for all that. But I say something to all of you that you know well because of where you live: we are living in a world where the ground is constantly shifting, where the future is coming quickly on us, where ideas are the currency of economics and politics, and where I think we have an obligation to use this magic moment not to bask in the sun but to bear down and deal with the long-term challenges of the country.

We will never have a time, probably in the lifetime of any of us here, where we have more opportunity to deal with the long-term challenges of America because of the good times. And that's what we ought to do. And that's what this election is all about.

We're doing our best, believe you me, to get a lot done in this session of Congress. We're trying to pass the health care bill of rights for consumers. Over half of our people are in HMO's now. We're trying to allow people who are retired, forcibly or otherwise, who can't draw Medicare and don't have any health insurance, to buy into it. We're trying to pass a dramatic improvement in our schools by going for higher standards, funds to help schools be repaired and remodeled, hook up all the classrooms in the country to the Internet by the year 2000, have smaller classes in the early grades. We are doing our best to try to meet the challenge of climate change and to do it in a way that generates new jobs and new technologies, by helping us to grow the economy as well.

We've got a lot of things to do. We're trying to protect our kids from a dramatic and troubling increase in young people beginning to smoke when we know it's illegal to sell cigarettes to teenagers, and we know 3,000 kids start smoking every day, and 1,000 will die early because of it.

We've got a big agenda. I'm going to do my best to pass it. All of us are committed to it. We're having a little trouble in Washington, as you know if you've been listening to the hot air burn its way off the newswires in the last few days, but we'll get a lot of this done. But make no mistake about it—there will be a lot to do after this election.

And what I would like to do is to spend the last 2 years of my Presidency taking on these big issues that will shape our country in the 21st century, that require someone to be able to stand there and take a position who clearly has no political agenda. I can't run for office anymore—unless I go home and run for the school board or something. [Laughter] I can't do that. But in order to shape the future in a way that creates opportunity and brings us together instead of divides us, it's very important what the texture of the Congress is. It's very important what the values of the Congress are.

You think about the long-term challenges of this country. Let me just mention two or three. We ought to, in 1999, reform Social Security for the 21st century and make it easier for people to save for their own retirement, because hardly anybody can live on a Social Security check alone. But on the other hand, we don't want to scrap the program altogether, because half of our senior citizens today would be in poverty if it weren't for Social Security adding to their income.

In 1999 we ought to reform Medicare for the 21st century. We should do that. You all know what the problems are. I'm the oldest of the baby boomers. When our crowd gets fully in the retirement pool, there will only be about two people working for every one person drawing Social Security. The present system is not sustainable.

Now, if we're going to change it, it's important we change it with the right values in mind. We ought to make a serious commitment in 1999, in my opinion, to a long-term plan to preserve the environment, to reduce global warming, and to do it in a way that will permit us to continue to grow the economy.

If you look at what Californians have done—the California voters have consistently voted, every time they have had a chance, to clean up the environment. And every time

they vote for it, there's this huge campaign which says, "If you do this, you will shut the economy down." And it's been wrong every time. For 28 years, ever since we adopted the Clean Air Act, every time the United States of America has adopted an environmental position, we have been told it was going to hurt the economy.

Since I've been President, we've made the air cleaner, the water cleaner, the food safer, and every time, the economy kept getting stronger. If you do it right, we can do this. But we have a big long-term challenge here that we ought to address in 1999.

We still don't have the kind of education system we need, and we still don't have a system of lifetime learning. We know that the average person will change the nature of his or her work seven or eight times in a lifetime. We've got to create a system in America where our elementary and secondary education is second to none, and then where an adult in the work force, no matter what their level of education, can always go back and learn a new skill. And we haven't done that yet.

And finally let me say, we still have a big agenda in the world. Dick Gephardt mentioned part of it. I hope we'll get it done this year. But, you know, I think most of you are proud of the fact that we saved who knows how many Bosnians from dying when we stopped the war in Bosnia and helped to implement the peace. I'm glad we replaced the military dictators in Haiti and gave democracy a chance there. I'm glad that we have worked for peace in Ireland, and I'm hoping and praying the referendum this month will come out all right. And the Secretary of State starts another round of intense efforts in London tomorrow on the Middle East peace process. I'm also proud of the fact that we have built enormous new trade relationships with our free allies in the Americas and in Asia.

But we can't lead the world if we don't even want to pay our way. And because of an unrelated political dispute in Washington today, we're over a year late paying our U.N. dues. Because of an unrelated political dispute in Washington today, we can't get America's contribution for the International Monetary Fund.

Now, most Americans don't know what the International Monetary Fund is, and that may be why our adversaries think they can get away with not funding our part of it. But 30 percent of the 15 million jobs we've gotten in the last 5 years have come from trade. Thirty percent of that trade is in Asia. Our trading partners in Asia are in trouble today, and the International Monetary Fund helps them. But they don't just write them a blank check, they only give them money if they agree to adopt a plan that will get them out of the trouble they're in.

Now, I haven't always agreed with every decision the IMF has made, and you haven't always agreed with every decision I've made. But you don't pick up your cards and quit voting if you don't agree with everything I do. And we can't pick up our cards and walk away and not pay. And this directly affects the prosperity of the people of California. We would not have seen the Californian economy come back as much as it has, had it not been for exports to Asia. And we owe it to the future of this country and to our children to pay our way at the IMF, to pay our way at the U.N., and to say, we do not expect to lead and not set a good example. Yes, we want to lead the world for peace and freedom and prosperity, but we expect to set a good example.

These are big issues. And I can just tell you, yes, I am a Democrat, and I'm proud of it. And I'm proud of where our party is now, and I'm proud of what's happened. But I'm not running anymore. I'm thinking about what my grandchildren's America is going to look like. And I'm going to do my best to get these big, big things taken care of for you in the last 2 years of my Presidency. But it cannot be done unless we have people of good will who are thinking about our children and our grandchildren instead of how they can cut a wide hole through a spirit of cooperation in Washington and raise the heat and turn down the light for some temporary political benefit.

That's not what we're about. That's not what our administration has been about. And I'm telling you, the three candidates who were introduced tonight and the Members of Congress who are here and their leaders who are here, if you give us a chance, we'll

deliver on those things, and our country's future will be more secure. And you will know you did it.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:07 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Martin Frost, chair, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Lt. Gov. Gray Davis of California; Art Torres, chair, California Democratic Party; and dinner hosts Eli and Edythe L. Broad.

Remarks at a California Labor Initiative Breakfast in Los Angeles, California

May 4, 1998

Thank you very much. I want to thank John Sweeney for those kind words and for his brilliant leadership in giving new life and energy and direction to the American labor movement. Thank you, Doug Dority and all the other labor leaders who are here. I thank Ron and Jan for opening their home to us and letting us relive the movie fantasies of the last 60 years here in this great old house.

I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to my longtime friend John Garamendi for his distinguished leadership as Deputy Secretary of the Interior, and he's now gone to work with Ron. And I wish him well in private life. He also got a daughter married off last weekend; he assures me it is survivable, but I'm not so certain. [Laughter] I thank the Members of Congress who are here, and Lt. Governor Davis, thank you for coming.

I would like to just say a few words to all of you who have come here to this fundraiser. First of all, you wouldn't be here if you didn't believe what I think is an elemental truth of the modern economy, which is that we can only have a good economy and a good society if we find ways to widen the circle of opportunity and to reward people for their labors. And insofar as we reward people for doing the right things, then those who are especially well-positioned will do even better.

John mentioned the Therma plant up in Silicon Valley I visited. Most people think that most of the places that are doing well up there are computer companies or biotech companies, but someone has to build all

those buildings that they work in, and someone has to supply them with what they need. And that plant, as John said, is a family-owned business with 1,600 workers, most of whom are sheet metal workers, a few of whom are in the plumbers union, but they're all unionized, and yet they have all the things that the enemies of organized labor always say you never see. They have a flexible workplace; they have incredible partnerships with their owners, and the people who run that plant are very, very proud with their relationship with the union and with the people on the floor. And they have a modern workplace in which no one wants to leave, because they think they're getting their fair share of the labor, and because they believe their labor is respected.

We have tried to do that. I was very disturbed when I became President that our country had had 20 years of increasing inequality among working people. And there were many reasons for it, some of them unavoidable, because we were changing the nature of the American economy, and whenever you change the nature of an economy—it happens about once every 50 or 60 years—the people that are really in the best positions do best. It happened when we went from being agricultural to an industrial economy. But a lot of it was because our people weren't well-equipped and weren't being treated fairly, and that people didn't understand that we had to make extra effort.

So I want to thank the labor movement and John Sweeney and all the other labor leaders for the things they've supported that their own members were not the primary beneficiaries of. Most of the people that got the benefit of the Family and Medical Leave Act were working people who did not have the benefit of union representation. Most of the people who got the benefit of the increase in the minimum wage, directly or indirectly, most, if not all, were union people—were not union workers. Most of the people who get the benefit of the earned-income tax credit, which is now worth \$1,000 a year to a family of four with an income of under \$30,000, and it's lifted 2.2 million children out of poverty—were working families that did not belong to unions. And so I thank you for being the voice, all of you, not only for